

Message Text

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UNCLAS BANGKOK 24537

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: MARR, MILI, TH

SUBJECT: PRESS REPORT: UTAPAO TO BE CIVILIAN AIRPORT

1. BANGKOK POST FRONT PAGE STORY TODAY QUOTED GOVERNMENT HOUSE SPOKESMAN SAYING CABINET HAS DECIDED UTAPAO WILL BECOME "AN ALTERNATE INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT AFTER THE COMPLETE WITHDRAWAL OF U.S. PLANES AND SERVICEMEN NEXT MARCH."

2. BEGIN TEXT UTAPAO AIRBASE WILL BE TRANSFORMED INTO AN ALTERNATE INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT AFTER THE COMPLETE WITHDRAWAL OF U.S. PLANES AND SERVICEMEN NEXT MARCH, GOVERNMENT HOUSE SPOKESMAN SATAB SIRIKANT TOLD THE BANGKOK POST YESTERDAY.

(PARA) THE PROPOSAL, RAISED BY THE ROYAL THAI NAVY WHICH CONTROLS THE BASE, WAS ACCEPTED AT TUESDAY'S CABINET SESSION.

(PARA) MR. SATAB SAID THE CABINET CONSIDERED IT A PRACTICAL SUGGESTION BECAUSE UTAPAO HAS ITS OWN AIRCRAFT MAINTENANCE WORKSHOP AND A LONG SPECIALLY-REINFORCED RUNWAY. (PARA) THE DISTANCE FROM UTAPAO TO BANGKOK WAS NOT CONSIDERED A PROBLEM CONSIDERING THE AVAILABILITY OF AIRCONDITIONED TOUR BUSES WHICH CAN MAKE THE TRIP IN UNDER THREE HOURS. (PAD) IT WAS POINTED OUT THAT TOURISTS FLYING INTO DON MUANG AIRPORT OFTEN

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GO STRAIGHT TO PATTAYA, WHICH IS ONLY 40 KILOMETERS FROM THE

BASE. (PARA) THE CABINET DECIDED THAT PUBLIC UTILITIES AT THE
BEACH RESORT SHOULD BE IMPROVED TO COPE WITH THE EXPECTED
INCREASE IN OVERSEAS VISITORS. (PARA) MEANWHILE, MR. SATAB
SAID HE PERSONALLY SUPPORTED THE IDEA THAT THE ROYAL THAI AIR
FORCE HEADQUARTERS AT DON MUANG SHOULD BE MOVED OUT OF BANGKOK
LEAVING MORE ROOM FOR THE CIVILIAN AIRPORT TO EXPAND. END TEXT
WHITEHOUSE

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